

2015 has been a year in which fear and money has driven our civilization and our ability to think into a corner. Image has invited researcher Janne Saarikivi to write a New Year's speech to remind us what really is important.

The year 2015 is coming to an end and the Annus Domini 2016 is about to begin. We can think about whether the time in which we live is good or bad at this turning point. If you read this in Finnish, you most likely belong to roughly ten per cent of world's population, which owns almost all of the world's wealth.

Perhaps you own a family home in Helsinki? In that case, you most likely belong to the world's richest one per cent. It covers 70 million people living mainly in Europe and North America. It is worth noting therefore, that the world's population is seven billion and they are close to us. They say that everyone is connected through only six or fewer degrees of separation in a familiar chain. Seven billion people are only six steps away. They can all be understood if you understand yourself. They long for the same things we do: food, warmth, good relationships and a clean toilet.

The remaining elements; namely religion, economic development, gender and language are indeed interesting, but, after all, in many respects secondary.

The majority of mankind cannot afford problems which Finland has. Depression, loneliness and alcoholism, indecision to do with spouses and mistresses and allergy caused by a household mold fungi are all first world problems. There are hundreds of millions of hungry, beaten, exhausted and persecuted people in the world, who'd be happy to trade their problems with our own.

Dear Finns! You are being lied to and made to believe all is going badly. They say that we are falling behind other countries, even if no competition has been declared between us. They say that we are threatened by the economic slowdown and debt growth. These are words from the Finnish Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Finance, all well-educated people.

It is despicable, self-centered, navel-gazing hate speech. If we use privileges and jobs, other countries and money as measures, we sure have it as well as we can in Finland. Perhaps it could be demonstrated that Norway and Massachusetts have it even better, but our material "well-being" is already at a level to be ashamed of.

Who is so childish to spend all their time asking who jumps the furthest, who is the highest, who has the longest? Well, that is a politician or perhaps a business leader! Or maybe it is an University Rector. Do not listen to them! Forget these tiny people who dream they are something great and need you to

implement their megalomaniac plans.

So many really have it bad, and our decision makers dare to demand the extremely rich Westerners more! Is that not despicable? This talk of economic growth, the need for austerity and cuts, "sustainability gap", encouragement speech, consultant lies, "Finnish know-how"! What nonsense and stupidity!

The world that you see around you, its artefacts and technologies, they are generated in such a way that we already use up a huge share of natural resources and energy. Our purchase power requires little hands in Bangladeshi textile factories, which beat their underage workers. Our dining table is loaded with treats that hike up our blood pressure and cholesterol, because somewhere there is an intensive pig farm, where the sows are unable to turn around and elsewhere there is a slaughterhouse, where a man brutally beats the pig before mechanically killing it.

No wonder eating this food is also slowly killing us.

And if only these were the main problems. I did not mention climate change, which destroys the flora and fauna around us, and eventually makes our society collapse that is based on the exploitation of plants and animals.

I am told that the threat of nuclear war, contrary to popular belief, has not decreased, but rather quietly increased. And the

countries with nuclear weapons are lead by such fools, who should not be allowed to heat a risotto in a microwave without a guardian, for example, Vladimir Putin and Benjamin Netanyahu.

The world is changing, but the activity that drives the change comes not only from sincere quest for progress, it is also driven by self-interest and selfishness. We are destroying bits of the world that should not be dependent on us at all, such as rain forests, marshes, mountain gorillas and black rhinoceros.

We should be inconsolable about this, because even if we know how to make more bombs, we don't know how to make rhinos. We can just kill them.

We can't even recover things that are essentially man-made. The 20th century has seen thousands of languages become extinct, most of which could not be documented. All of them included opportunities to speak and think in many ways that are no longer known. Many streams, marshes, and forests had been named in these languages.

Streams and marshes are left but our understanding of them has been replaced by a mute silence, or an engineer's calculation on how much power or turf can be harvested from them.

Multiculturalism is gone, the remaining balance is made from the monoculturalism of "benefits" and "profit", ie. the sound of

greed, on top of which rings an ever-louder and numbing sound of entertainment.

Dear citizens! In 1915, the world had the Tasmanian thylacine, the Java and the Caspian tiger, the baiji, Liivi, Akkala Sami and manx-associated languages and their thinking and culture. Now, in 2015, none of them no longer exist.

I request a minute's silence to commemorate them.

Dear Finns, fellow citizens! Now, change it all. There is no obligation for the world to remain this way. Sure it can be changed. But first, we must think differently and imagine a different world. And give up the wrong aims.

First of all, Finland's economy is already quite big. What matters least is whether it is bigger than any other country's economy or whether it grows faster. A life that exists solely for the purpose of comparing with others is not for grown-ups.

Secondly, it is all the same, whether the state incurs debt or not. That's what the banks are for; to lend money when there's none. Interest rates being at zero the state debt servicing cost less than before. And if it really looks like the money is about to run out, then let's reduce wages, mostly from high earners. We can make do with less.

But let's not go on and on about it. The scarcity of resources at present does not warrant a complete overhaul of the system.

Houses do not get any better every time we cannot afford the heating and decide to put the boards and bricks into a new order.

It is absolutely unimportant whether the University of Helsinki ranks according to some strange index as one of the hundred best schools in the world. Or if Finland does well with a PISA study. Or if Helsinki makes the Monocle magazine's sexy cities list. Let's forget such things and never remember them again.

Now, let's try to understand why politics, the system, which should guide us, is at such a wonky angle. Why do we only seem to have this competitive diatribe or "top-this-or-that" hype rather than talk about meaningful issues.

There are at least three reasons. One of them is the states.

Politicians operate in different countries, and governments alone cannot decide anything very important. On the one hand they are just too big to control the opening times of shops and bars, on the other hand they are too small to stop real threats such as climate change.

The economy is global, the policy isn't. This is the biggest problem of the system. If the policy is relevant, it is either a local policy or global policy.

It is actually important whether a school principal is a jerk and if the nimbys are allowed to shut the bars at five o'clock. We can

determine our minds and see the actions up close.

But then there is the question of how to stay alive, and how even a couple of dolphins and a gorilla could survive with us. It is the most important thing, and it cannot rest on the Finnish Prime Minister.

Good people! Let's establish a global party, which will drive the same goals in all countries. It will demand a stop to the endless growth and egoism, value human dignity, and drive to abolish armies. People matter, and the animals and plants matter, companies and the economy do not.

Another reason why policy does not work, is because of time, because of history.

A series of cowardly and deplorable terrorist attacks took place in Paris in November, killing about 130 people. Countless additional news bulletins were broadcast in real time and many newspapers of the world wrote millions of unnecessary words about it. About this simple matter, and the stupid ideology of stupid people, of killing and desire for revenge.

Meanwhile, forests were burning in Indonesia. A few of the last remaining Borneo orangutans were burned alive and the fire threatened places where some of the world's last hunter-gatherers' languages are spoken. The forest fire produced so much carbon dioxide that it alone was enough to defeat the US and Europe combined emission reduction goals over many

years. One of the reasons for the fire was to increase our efforts to live ecologically and to produce cheap palm oil, an ecological fuel. This activity on the ground is led by Neste Oil, a Finnish listed company, among others.

What is perhaps most interesting, is the fact that none of this was talked about or broadcast, as the tragedy evolved gradually, over weeks and far from the world's centers.

If we cannot redirect our gaze from Paris to Borneo and spend weeks instead of minutes with it - as what happens in Borneo is incomparably more important than what happened in Paris - how are we supposed to ever be able to focus on the problems that determine our future.

The melting of the polar ice caps, species becoming extinct and the uncontrolled rapid population growth began prior to the current politicians and will continue after them.

But politicians are worried about their own electability and the elections every couple of years. Therefore, speaking disgustingly of refugees committing rape and building a section of the highway within their constituency must go ahead the Borneo forest fires.

Finland sent a delegation to the Paris Climate Change Conference, but it wasn't sent off with a choir of people singing the hymn *A Mighty Fortress in Our God*, unlike with Paasikivi who was sent to Moscow to negotiate a piece of land. Even



though it is the whole earth in question, what exists at all. No, because the politicians did not request it nor the media commanded.

The third reason for the misery, and worst of all, is money.

Our society, our country and our world is in the throes of a collective disease. It's called greed. Greed has led us to lose meanings from our language to such an extent that we are no longer able to speak about any issue without mentioning money at the same time.

Day care centers, universities, environmental protection, regional policy, all of these will be turned into an issue of money in a split second, if we let the politician speak.

Everything has to generate money, otherwise it is nothing. This applies to science and art, and soon enough to the church and religion. Overall, everything that previously had to do with the states and their budgets, or the current understanding of economics.

Money and the economy, which are supposed to be the servants of a meaningful life, have merged into a crazy blind ruler, which the right and the left worship alike. There are organized Slush-fairs that showcase the many creative ideas. But the idea of the fair is unappealing from the start when you understand that it is set up just to line someone's pockets.

What if someone could come up with the world's greatest idea,

which would explain everything, but would not generate business, jobs nor money? Would it get column space? Would fairs be organized? Would it attract selfie-ready ministers to the scene?

I ask you to be silent again. And during the silence think about what is really important. To think of something which cannot be consumed through earning, career, success, money.

Finally, good citizens, I would like to speak little about things that sidestep money. Things that can make our lives meaningful and can withstand competition and consumerism, and which will make you forget the slogan *Suomi Nousuun*.

Firstly I would like to touch on knowledge and understanding of science.

Research done on university students' motivation shows that the only thing we seem to be able to talk about - money - is not what actually motivates many people.

High-income earning doctors and lawyers want to graduate because they essentially want to improve the world. People want to study Assyriology or go into priesthood although they are likely to face difficulties in sustaining a career or salary. The most popular areas of study according to entrance exams and students enrolment are the most uncertain and in worst paid sectors like the acting, visual arts, anthropology or archeology.

People realise that an endless number of tin foil hats can be sold to China, but life doesn't increase by a number a days. None of them is to be wasted for something that doesn't matter. And the discoveries that we gain through science i.e. historical understanding, criticality, the ability to see through general banalities, are far more valuable than any pile of money.

Then there is art and experience. The excitement to do something and through the making open the world from a whole new point. To make a new connection with people somewhere far away, or with people who are born hundreds of years later. Make windows into a dark house, let in the light from different worlds visited by no one else. Play and laugh in such a way that fear and horror are forgotten. Put these same words into a succession in such a way that seems absurd at first, but at the same time they build a connection, which is more sensitive than touch and better than the best sex.

Give life to serving truth.

Produce a stream of tears that come from deep within the core of humanity, from individual and collective consciousness, that go way beyond the superego, the stock exchange and the policy.

Then there is religion. To dedicate ones life to something holy that is not in our hands. To stand under the stars, to hear the first cry of a baby being born, to hear the last sigh of a dying old man, to stand by a granite headstone and silently say thank

you. To consider the sentences that were uttered in exactly the same way, hundreds and thousands of years ago and to think about how their repetition creates a connection to the life beyond death, as is believed.

And then there are other people. Those who live under the same roof as you. They, through which you have entered here. The eyes that you choose and that will keep you alive, or hurt you terribly.

Or do both at the same time, and you have no will to let go.

To devote ones life to others, and that way get more than we would ever get if kept just to ourselves. The desire to do good, to share, to give without greed.

Good Finns! I wish you a Happy New Year! Gott nytt år! Buriid ođđa jagi Suoma sápmelaččaide! And parembua birdhouse vuottu Muga karjalankielizillä ristikanzaloilla! Be human! Take it easy! Do not believe the nonsense that is repeated in the world! Do not worship money! I wish you the blessing of the Supreme.